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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2006

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Diego **Simancas** (Mexico)

IV. Documentation and publication-related matters

B. Provision of summary records

Introduction and overview

1. At its 479th meeting, on 13 September 2006, the Committee considered the section of the report concerning the provision of summary records (A/61/129, paras. 73-80). In an effort to address the concerns of Member States, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management initiated a project at Headquarters to clear the backlog of summary records. It had succeeded in issuing records of all meetings held back to 2003 and had tackled the backlog relating to 2002 and earlier, as capacity became available. In addition, a pilot project was undertaken during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly to issue all summary records of the regular session within three months of its close, a target that was successfully met. In 2005, the English Translation Service had drafted all summary records.

2. The Secretariat was exploring the practical and financial implications of the various approaches proposed to the provision of summary records, which include replacing summary records with digital recordings, reducing the number of bodies entitled to summary records, concentrating précis-writing in the English Translation Service, restricting the length of summary records to 5,000 words and eliminating publishing and distribution of summary records.

Discussion

3. The Committee commended the progress made in clearing the backlog of summary records and in the timely issuance of the records of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. Some delegations expressed concern that concentrating the

drafting of summary records in the English Translation Service could adversely affect linguistic parity, however. A status report was also requested on investigation of the possibility of replacing summary records with digital recordings of meetings.

4. A representative of the Secretariat said that the pilot project to concentrate drafting of summary records in the English Translation Service was a pragmatic response to the need to speed up issuance of records, and in no way represented unequal treatment of one official language. All records were translated into all official languages before being issued. The possibility of producing digital recordings of meetings, currently in use in some other international organizations, was still being explored. A summary record represented added value, as a succinct record of a meeting that contained all decisions and actions taken. On the other hand, the cost of digital or DVD recordings could be significantly lower. It was for Member States, as the primary users of meeting records, to decide what product was most useful to them.